

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7712

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0293

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EINV ECON VN FR

SUBJ: FRENCH DIPLOMAT'S VIEWS ON SRV

1. FRENCH DCM IN VIENTIANE LAMBERT TOLD POLOFF ABOUT BRIEF VISIT HE MADE TO NORTHERN VIETNAM AS TOURIST, RETURNING FEBRUARY 8. LAMBERT, WHO HAS LONG ESPOUSED ANTI-COMMUNIST VIEWS AND HAD SERVED IN VIETNAM BEFORE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER, SAID CONDITIONS WERE POOR IN NORTH VIETNAM WHICH WAS AT SAME STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT AS IT HAD BEEN IN 1930.

2. HE SAID GOVERNMENT COOPERATIVE STORES WERE MORE POORLY STOCKED THAN THOSE IN VIENTIANE, AND CADRES GOT THE BEST PRODUCTS FROM THEM, TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE ORDINARY CITIZENS. THE NORTH, HE SAID, WAS SYSTEMATICALLY PLUNDERING THE SOUTH, BRINGING IN CONSUMER GOODS SUCH AS STEREO SETS AND MOTORCYCLES.

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3. LAMBERT SAID THE ONLY EVIDENCE OF NEW CONSTRUCTION HE HAD SEEN ON A TRIP FROM HANOI TO THE RESORT AT THE BAIE D'ALONG WAS A CEMENT FACTORY BEING REBUILT AT HAIPHONG. OTHER THAN THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN HANOI, HE SAW NO SIGNS OF BOMB DAMAGE DESPITE VIETNAMESE PROPAGANDA TO THE CONTRARY. INCOMING SHIPMENTS WAITED ON THE DOCKS AT HAIPHONG FOR SIX MONTHS, EXPOSED TO THE

RAIN, HE WENT ON, AND MANY AUTOMOBILES HAD BEEN RUINED.

4. THE VIETNAMESE HAD SENT 30,000 CADRES TO BE TRAINED IN THE USSR, POLAND, AND EAST GERMANY, LAMBERT CONTINUED, BUT THEY STILL DID NOT KNOW HOW TO RUN THEIR COUNTRY.

5. PRIME MINISTER PHAM VAN DONG PLANNED TO VISIT FRANCE IN APRIL, LAMBERT SAID, AND THE FRENCH WANTED TO DISCUSS WITH HIM INDEMNIFICATION FOR THEIR PRIVATE INVESTMENTS IN THE SOUTH. THE FRENCH CLAIMED THE VIETNAMESE OWED 1.5 BILLION FRANCS, WHILE THE LATTER WERE WILLING TO AGREE ON A DEBT OF .3 BILLION.

6. LAMBERT NOTED THAT THE OFFICIAL RATE FOR THE DONG WAS 2 DONG PER US DOLLAR WHILE THE BLACK MARKET RATE WAS 20 TO ONE. HE SAID THE AVERAGE VIETNAMESE EARNED ONLY 40 DONG A MONTH.
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